

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, April 5, 1901, with transcript, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Hotel Londres, Naples. April 5, 1901.

While I am waiting for my bath I will begin a letter to you, my dear Alec, although there isn't much to write about.

I haven't heard from you since we left Paris. I am sure you must have written and that the letters have been sent to Rome, but they have not reached me yet. The cable I received in answer to mine is a great comfort in this dearth of news, for Mamma has not heard either. It was lovely at Castellammare and none of us wanted to leave, but yesterday was Maundy Thursday, an important day in the calendar of Holy Week so we wanted to be here to see how it was celebrated. Charles telegraphed that services began at eleven, so we got up at six A.M. Arrived here, ? D omenico, our courier, said there was nothing to see until twelve so we sat down and had lunch. At twelve we started for the Cathedral, only to see the crowd coming out! We were mad I tell you. Domenico said he had meant that we were to be there at twelve and he hadn't liked to disturb us at lunch. This when he knew that we had taken the trouble to get up at six on purpose. The ceremony was the washing of feet in commemoration of Our Lord's act. He however saw all the shrines within and without the churches dressed with fresh flowers and lighted with candles. It was an extremely pretty sight when at night we drove through the streets and saw all these roadside shrines lighted up. Some of the shrines were small with only three or four wax candles, others had dozens and even hundreds of candles 2 blazing away and they reminded me of many Christmas trees at home. Such crowds as there were on the streets. Markets were in full swing with the light of lamps and candles. While up and down the Via Rome great clouds of orderly, well dressed people promenaded slowly. The whole street

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was given up to them, no carriages being allowed even to cross it. I was much struck with the behavior of these people. They were so quiet and sober and well-dressed and there was little noise or much confusion. The few policemen who were to be seen here and there at street corners were tall and dignified in their picturesque three-cornered hats and their behavior was on a piece, quiet and magisterial. I saw them stop a carriage that attempted to cross. One of the gentlemen in it reminded Daisy and me of you in his white beard. The policeman simply told the coachman that it was impossible that he could pass, impossible he repeated after urgent entreaty, but he never lifted his finger or indulged in the slightest gesticulation such as the Paris policemen find necessary. And then the carriage turned quietly around and drove back while Signor the three-cornered policeman leaned calmly back against the street wall. We got Domenico from Cook's, but we shall not take him to Sicily I think. I am sure Charles would have done just about as well and at about half the cost, but I thought Mamma would feel better satisfied to try a regular courier. Dr. White advised us so strongly to go to Sicily that I thought we'd better, it is the one place in Italy I have not seen. We are all very well. The Miss Whitney who is travelling with us is a granddaughter of the Whitney 3 who invented the cotton gin and is a very pretty quiet girl, older than Daisy. When my bath is I don't know, but my paper is to end, so goodbye.

Ever lovingly yours, Mabel. Thanks Alec dear for your letters. A pile almost six inches high came. I spent the whole afternoon reading them. I can't answer them now as am in a hurry, but I love you for writing me so fully and keeping me in touch with all your work. What a wonderful man you are Sandisan. Take care of yourself and run down often to Virginia Beach. Don't get too tired. Lovingly.